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***NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY***  
***JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE***  
**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



DECODING CHINA'S CENTURY OF HUMILIATION: RELEVANCE OF  
HISTORY AND THE IMPACT ON SINO-JAPANESE AND SINO-U.S. RELATIONS

*by*

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.**

**This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes. (or appropriate statement per the Academic Integrity Policy)**

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## ABSTRACT

During the period of 1840-1949, a period that China now calls its *Century of Humiliation*, China suffered continuous military defeats to Japan and the West, and reluctantly signed numerous treaties that resulted in the loss of Chinese treasure and sovereignty. China aggrandizes the events of its *Century of Humiliation* to incite nationalism and anti-Japanese/anti-Western sentiment for three connected outcomes: the creation of a narrative to focus its citizens' unrest toward a common enemy, to excite its citizens to show political resolve, and to signal to the international community diplomatic intent and willingness for escalation. This creates a conundrum for Japan and the West in how they deal with China. Japan and the West can recognize China's unrest and plight and succumb to Chinese escalation in recognition of their role in "humiliating" China; or, Japan and the West can ignore China's propaganda, risk escalation, and face an outpouring of Chinese nationalism stimulated by the Chinese government. Alternatively, this paper will propose a third option, the creation of an Interagency Strategic Communications Group with the sole purpose of countering China's propaganda and disinformation by exposing China's narrative for what it is: the glorification of half-truths.

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## INTRODUCTION

In a July 2017 speech to the citizens of Hong Kong, China's President, Xi Jinping, addressed the protests to Beijing's tightening grip on Hong Kong. Xi recalled events of the past that brought Hong Kong under the control of a foreign government and reminded the citizens that it was China's defeat during the Opium Wars that resulted in "Kowloon<sup>1</sup> and the New Territories [being] forced to leave China's embrace at that time, (and) China's history was full of the nation's humiliation and the people's sorrow."<sup>2</sup> The humiliation that Xi referred to was not a single isolated event in China's past. Rather, from 1840 until 1945 China suffered multiple humiliating military defeats, treaties that stunted its economic and technological growth, and literally raped and pillaged its people. This timespan, now known as the *Century of Humiliation*, left a wound in the Chinese people in a way that has arguably still not healed.<sup>3</sup>

China's *Century of Humiliation*, is a focal point of speeches, national education, and political rhetoric whenever China looks to assert its authority, both internally, and externally.<sup>4</sup> Reference to the *Century of Humiliation* has taken on more meaning than just mourning. It is through this mourning that the Chinese government has been able to crystalize that period of time into much more than just a sad moment in Chinese History.

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<sup>1</sup> Kowloon encompasses the northern part of Hong Kong, on the mainland across Victoria Harbour. Once a separate city, it was acquired by Britain in 1860 and returned to China with the rest of the colony in 1997. [https://www.google.com/search?q=kowloon+hong+kong&oq=kowloon+hong+kong&gs\\_l=psy-ab.3..0110.36836.38649.0.38796.9.9.0.0.0.100.666.8j1.9.0....0...1.1.64.psy-ab..0.9.663....0.AAk\\_OuMp9Ek](https://www.google.com/search?q=kowloon+hong+kong&oq=kowloon+hong+kong&gs_l=psy-ab.3..0110.36836.38649.0.38796.9.9.0.0.0.100.666.8j1.9.0....0...1.1.64.psy-ab..0.9.663....0.AAk_OuMp9Ek)

<sup>2</sup> Neil Connor, "China's Xi Jinping recalls National 'Humiliation' to Britain as he seeks to stir patriotism in Hong Kong," The Telegraph, July 1, 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/01/chinas-xi-jinping-recalls-national-humiliation-britain-seeks/> (accessed October 21, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 49-69.

<sup>4</sup> "General Secretary Xi Jinping Explicates the "Chinese Dream",," *Chinese Law and Government* 2016 Vol. 48, NO. 6 (May 2013): 477-479, trans. Ted Wang, Taylor & Francis Group, extracted from Xinhua Materials, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2013-05/08/c\\_124669102.html](http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2013-05/08/c_124669102.html) (accessed on October 12, 2017).

As Zheng Wang comments, this period in Chinese history has become a “chosen trauma;” China has “chosen to psychologize and mythologize—to dwell on and exaggerate—the event.”<sup>5</sup>

The Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute in 2012 was an excellent example of this. After the Japanese government purchased the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands from a private owner in an attempt to deescalate tensions, anti-Japanese demonstrators held signs of Mao Zedong and chanted slogans such as, “Declare War!”<sup>6</sup> The Chinese citizens were not as concerned about the islands so much as they were concerned about who was occupying the islands, the Japanese. The Chinese immediately correlated the island incident to the *Century of Humiliation*, to the atrocities committed by the Japanese, and to the leader who brought China out of the humiliating century, Mao.

China’s *chosen trauma* is more than just a rallying point, though; it is a point of departure from which China can realize its future. Xi, like Chinese leaders before him, references the *Century of Humiliation* as a way to mobilize Chinese citizens and to provide justification for Chinese policies.<sup>7</sup> Xi, characterizing the way forward for China, commonly refers to the *Century of Humiliation* and then refers to the Chinese Dream. The Chinese Dream is a “mission statement” and “political manifesto” for China’s *rejuvenation*.<sup>8</sup> For Xi, “to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the

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<sup>5</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Gries, Derek Steiger, and Wang Tao, "Social Media, Nationalist Protests, and China's Japan Policy: The Diaoyu Islands Controversy, 2012–13," In *The Internet, Social Media, and a Changing China*, edited by DeLisle Jacques, Goldstein Avery, and Yang Guobin: 161-79, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1b3t8nr.11>, 162.

<sup>7</sup> Zheng Wang, "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context." *Journal Of Chinese Political Science* 19, no. 1: 1-13. *Academic Search Premier* (accessed September 11, 2017), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Wang, “The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,” 1.

greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history.”<sup>9</sup> That meaning of rejuvenation invokes more than just a recovery from the disgrace of China’s past; it is a new China, one that is mindful of its past, careful never to repeat it, but also a China that “. . . regains, with military force if necessary, China’s rightful great power status, dignity and respect.”<sup>10</sup>

To a Western observer, it would seem that China has fully recovered from its past and that its transformation to a formidable military and economic power has already earned it dignity and respect in the international community. Whereas Western cultures tend to look toward the future with little weight on the past, those in Asian cultures tend to view the past as a window into the future.<sup>11</sup> Yet it would be dangerous for the West to believe that China can only gain dignity and respect if it reconciles its past.

Chinese political leaders often use the *Century of Humiliation* as a means to foment anti-Western fervor as a projection for future possibilities. As Camilla Sørensen asserts, “the *Chinese Dream* is part of the current Chinese leadership’s effort to ensure domestic stability and maintain the control and their own legitimacy domestically.”<sup>12</sup> Focusing on the *Chinese dream*, a focus toward the future, allows Xi to redirect discontent within the country toward a different, loftier goal.<sup>13</sup> It gives unhappy and

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<sup>9</sup> “Xi Pledges ‘Great renewal of Chinese nation,’” Xinhua, 2012  
[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-11/29/c\\_132008231.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-11/29/c_132008231.htm), (accessed September 11, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Camilla T.N. Sørensen, “The Significance of Xi Jinping’s “Chinese Dream” for Chinese Foreign Policy: From “Tao Guang Yang Hui” to “Fen Fa You Wei,”” *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, NO. 1 (2015): 53-73.  
<http://search.proquest.com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/docview/1913382395?accountid=12686> (accessed October 12, 2017), 57.

<sup>11</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Sørensen, The significance of Xi Jinping’s “Chinese Dream” for Chinese Foreign Policy: From “Tao Guang Yang Hui” to “Fen Fa You Wei”, 56.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 56.

discontented Chinese citizens something else to focus on, similar to distracting a crying child with a toy. China can do this because it does not just focus the citizens on the future, it also focuses them on the past. The new rhetoric of the *Chinese dream* cannot be divorced from the *Century of Humiliation*. When re-focusing Chinese citizens away from domestic problems, by referencing events from the *Century of Humiliation*, China can quickly foment anti-Western or anti-Japanese sentiment while simultaneously giving the citizens hope for a better tomorrow.

Strategically, Chinese political leaders interpret even minor Western or Japanese actions as slights against China and Chinese nationalism. The complex ways in which Chinese leaders leverage its *Century of Humiliation* often creates an inescapable paradox for Western and Japanese leaders. Any action either celebrates Chinese strengths or conflagrates resolve. The *Century of Humiliation* and how China uses it is complex and worthy of study. Analyzing China's *Century of Humiliation* will produce a better understanding of the country's resurgence in nationalism, how China views its security, what it is willing to do to protect it, as well as providing insight into the risks that Japan and the West face when dealing with China.

This paper will show how ancient Chinese culture and China's isolation left it technologically behind its Japanese and Western counterparts and how that directly led to the dominance of China by Japanese and Western nations during China's *Century of Humiliation*. This paper will then examine two outcomes of China's *Century of Humiliation*. First, it will take a brief look at the birth of Chinese nationalism, from the Opium Wars until present day, in order to show how nationalism, through the lens of the past, has taken on a life of its own. It will also show how China cultivates nationalism to

create a narrative that it uses for both internal and external politics. Second, by viewing the *Century of Humiliation* from a Chinese perspective, this paper will show where anti-Japanese and anti-Western sentiment comes from. It will link anti-Japanese and anti-Western sentiment together to show how China treats them the same given today's crafted alliances. After establishing the basis for these outcomes from the *Century of Humiliation*, this paper will then show how these outcomes have steered Chinese decision making in relation to Japan, and the United States. This paper will then analyze how China's "victim narrative," created from the *Century of Humiliation*, could lead China and Japan and/or the West toward armed conflict in the future. Finally, this paper will make a recommendation to stand up a Strategic Communications Interagency Group to counter China's Psychological and Media Warfare and to contest China's victim narrative, similar to what the US created during the cold war to counter the Soviet Union's propaganda and deception campaigns during the Cold War.

## CHAPTER 1: THE GENESIS OF HUMILIATION

The years that led up to 1840 were relatively peaceful for China. While Europe was busy warring and discovering, China was self-involved. From 1700 until 1840, China did not have any substantial existential threats.<sup>1</sup> Europe, where governments were expanding and warring to do so, was too geographically distant to pose a challenge to China. China continued its introverted existence, mostly as an agrarian state, with no need of inventions for war or inventions to progress economically.<sup>2</sup> China was a self-fulfilled state; it had what it needed within its borders.

With no external threat, and no reason to search for outside resources, China fell behind the West, particularly Europe. In the search for resources, and the resulting competition and warring, Europe developed capitalism. European countries needed to pay for the next war and to fund militaries to fight it; they developed a banking system wherein a country borrows from itself and its people to generate capital.<sup>3</sup> This capitalist system not only benefited states in their quests to build armies, but also allowed individuals the ability to fund their own research, which furthered the desire and capacity for invention, ushering in the Scientific Revolution that led Europe into the Industrial Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Even more important is that while Europe entered the industrial age, China, remained in the agricultural age.

The Industrial Revolution changed Europe. One of the most significant inventions during the Industrial Revolution was the steam engine. The steam engine

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<sup>1</sup>Mitch Anderson, *China's Century of Humiliation: A Look at China's Interaction with the West Throughout the Nineteenth Century*, directed by Mitch Anderson, (Deep Water Films: 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *China's Century of Humiliation: A Look at China's Interaction with the West Throughout the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



allowed Europe to trade more efficiently and more aggressively, both internally and externally.<sup>5</sup> Traders began seeking outside economies for trade. Chinese goods, such as tea and porcelain, drew Britain's interest, and trade with China became worth pursuing through the neighboring British colony of India. China initially rejected trading outside the country except in Canton where government trading was strictly monitored and controlled.<sup>6</sup> When the Chinese Emperor Jaiqing took power in the 1790's, however, he saw an opportunity for government revenue through the tax of increased trade.<sup>7</sup> With open trade now encouraged, trading greatly increased.

Initially, British traders brought cotton from Europe and India to trade for Chinese goods.<sup>8</sup> However, because China was still an agrarian society, it was able to develop its own cotton industry and soon had no need for British cotton.<sup>9</sup> In fact, China had little need or desire for almost all British goods, whereas the British still had great desire for Chinese goods. In order to maintain trade, Britain paid silver for Chinese goods, a currency well established in both the West and China.<sup>10</sup> This created a massive trade deficit for Britain. Not only was this bad for the British Empire, but also had a direct impact on goods-traders as well, with few goods to trade on one-half of their journey.<sup>11</sup> However, the Chinese desired Opium and the British East-India had access to it.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., and John Brown, "The Opium Wars," *Military History* 21, No. 1 (April 2004): 34-42. *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed October 27, 2017), 34

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, *China's Century of Humiliation: A Look at China's Interaction with the West Throughout the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Mitch Anderson, *China's Century of Humiliation: A Look at China's Interaction with the West Throughout the Nineteenth Century*.

While China outlawed Opium, the enforcement of its ban was almost non-existent.<sup>12</sup> Initially, the drug was smuggled into China in small amounts, but as demand for the drug increased, so did the influx.<sup>13</sup> The British East-India Company had a monopoly on the production and shipping of the drug out of India.<sup>14</sup> This benefited Britain threefold: first, it gave its Indian colony an export from which to profit; second, its traders were now employed and profitable on both ends of their trip; and third, it slowed and reversed the flow of silver between Britain and China.<sup>15</sup> During the 1820's and 1830's the opium trade boomed. The opium boom distressed Chinese leaders, though, as Opium was not only affecting the trade balance, it was also denigrating the population.<sup>16</sup> China's leaders needed to do something to reinforce the ban on Opium for the sake of its people and its economy.

China attempted several methods to stop the flow of opium into its country. China tried a reeducation campaign about the dangers of opium use; they created sanatoriums for addicts; they pursued the dealers in an attempt at elimination; the Emperor even sent a letter to the Queen of England in hopes of persuading her to intervene on moral grounds.<sup>17</sup> None of the efforts succeeded. The Chinese government cracked down, seized the opium from warehouses in Canton, and burned it.<sup>18</sup> This led to quarreling between British traders in China and the Chinese government. The Chinese government banned the traders and forbade their return unless they signed bonds agreeing

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, "The Opium Wars," 35.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *China's Century of Humiliation: A Look at China's Interaction with the West Throughout the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. and Brown, "The Opium Wars," 36.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, *China's Century of Humiliation: A Look at China's Interaction with the West Throughout the Nineteenth Century*.

to no longer trade in opium with China.<sup>19</sup> The traders refused and pleaded with the British government to intervene.

The British government viewed China's actions as insolent and threatening to Britain's economy. Britain sent an expeditionary force to China to protect its interests, marking the beginning of the first Opium War. The war was one-sided however, and the British forces quickly overwhelmed the weak and technologically inferior Chinese at Canton and Chusan.<sup>20</sup> This resulted in the Plenipotentiary from Britain and local viceroy from China negotiating the Convention of Chuenpi, wherein China ceded the island of Hong Kong and paid a reparation of 6 million Mexican Silver Dollars to Britain.<sup>21</sup> When the Chinese and British governments received word of the Convention, both governments repudiated the terms and both punished their respective representative.<sup>22</sup> The warring between the two countries continued for almost seven months, with almost every contact favoring the British, until the British forces reached Nanking. Before the British forces could attack, Chinese emissaries came out to negotiate.<sup>23</sup> The negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Nanking and the end of the first Opium War.

For the first time, China's isolation during the Industrial Revolution had significant consequences. China's matchlock muskets were no match for the superior British percussion-lock muskets, and China's war junks could not compete with Britain's warships.<sup>24</sup> This dispelled China's Confucian belief that man could live in harmony. The great Chinese empire and Qing dynasty were at risk; China's naivety of Western

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<sup>19</sup> Brown, "The Opium Wars," 36.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 37.

intentions and capabilities left it unprepared for the approaching onslaught of foreign powers who would impose their will on China by extracting treasure and resources for the next century, while China had little capability to stop them.

One can begin to see how China's past has played a significant role in shaping its future dealings with outside nations. The next chapter will discuss how China's *Century of Humiliation* became the origin for Chinese nationalism. It will provide context to the events that created Chinese nationalism and will close by demonstrating how China uses nationalism in its international negotiations today.

## CHAPTER 2: CHINESE NATIONALISM: ORIGINS AND APPLICATIONS

A common method to analyze a country's instruments of national power is by breaking it up into its diplomatic, information, military, and economic powers, or DIME.<sup>1</sup> This is a very simplistic method to understand how a country uses its available resources to protect and further its national interests. In analyzing China, there is one additional source of power, which does not seem to fit the DIME model: nationalism. Nationalism, as defined by Ernst Haas, and accepted by this author, is "the convergence of territorial and political loyalty irrespective of competing foci of affiliation, such as kinship, profession, religion, economic interest, race, or even language."<sup>2</sup> However, China uses nationalism for more than just loyalty, it uses nationalism to motivate citizens, to escalate or de-escalate tensions between themselves and other countries, to quell unrest when internal strife has potential to cause conflict, and to message its resolve to neighboring countries, along with various other uses. Nationalism has truly become an instrument of power for China. Simply put, nationalism has become a license for China to pursue its policies.

### Roots of Nationalism

At the end of the first Opium War in 1842, Britain had agreed to cease its shipment of Opium to Chinese territory.<sup>3</sup> British traders, with an eye toward profit, not the treaty, broke the agreement almost immediately. The opium trade continued and

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operational Planning (June 15, 2017), I-15.

<sup>2</sup> Earnst B. Haas, "What is Nationalism and Why Should We Study it?" *International Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Summer, 1986): 707-744, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706824>, (accessed February 8, 2018), 709.

<sup>3</sup> John Brown, "The Opium Wars," *Military History* 21, No. 1 (April 2004): 34-42. *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed October 27, 2017), 39.

actually began to increase.<sup>4</sup> China retaliated against the violation and started the second Opium War in October, 1856. Britain responded to assert its authority and protect its interests. France also seized the opportunity to profit and allied itself with Britain in the subjugation of China.<sup>5</sup> China lacked the military and technology to defeat the Western powers, picking a fight that they could not win. This was once again an embarrassment and a significant setback for the Chinese people. The end of the second Opium War resulted in Peking, the Chinese capital, occupied by Western forces, and the Chinese Emperor fleeing to Mongolia.<sup>6</sup> To add insult to injury, the British High Commissioner, whom Britain had appointed to oversee the war, burned the Emperor's summer palace, the Yuanming Yuan Palace, not only for reprisal, but to “teach” future emperors to maintain the peace.”<sup>7</sup> The Westerners had intended to provide a lesson, but instead achieved a basis for national humiliation and a symbol for nationalism. Today those same grounds remain nearly untouched as a National Ruin. As Wang says, “Yuanming Yaun has become a symbol of China's chosen trauma,”<sup>8</sup> a symbol on which it bases its current nationalism.

China had not recovered from the Opium Wars before it received another blow to its territory, and perhaps more importantly, its pride, when Japan, a previous tributary and vassal state, handily defeated them in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895.<sup>9</sup> This came as a shock to both China and the outside world. China had begun its process of

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<sup>4</sup> John Brown, "The Opium Wars," 39.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 39; Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 52.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, "The Opium Wars," 42.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>8</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 54.

“self-strengthening movement” following the Opium Wars in an effort to modernize its military.<sup>10</sup> However, China’s efforts toward modernization were not enough. Japan had also modernized, but had done so “along the lines of Western nation states, not only industrially and militarily, but also in the economic, political, legal, and cultural spheres.”<sup>11</sup> Japan’s navy easily defeated the Chinese Beiyang Fleet in the mouth of the Yalu River, destroying the Chinese Navy.<sup>12</sup> Japan’s army proceeded to march north, cross the Yalu River, and seize Port Arthur.<sup>13</sup> The Japanese Army continued into China, invaded Manchuria, controlled critical sea-lanes to Beijing, and drove China to sue for peace.<sup>14</sup> Japan had gained status as an Asian colonial power, superseded China, and shifted the balance of power in Asia, adding to China’s humiliation.<sup>15</sup>

When news of China’s defeat reached the Chinese public, “revolutionary nationalism” resulted.<sup>16</sup> Chinese citizens, unhappy with China’s decline, its subjugation to foreign powers in concessions and treaties, and its military impotence, began a grassroots movement known as the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>17</sup> There was a realization amongst the Chinese people that China was no longer the power they once were, or perceived themselves to be, and that foreigners and their influences had caused the decline. Self-proclaimed Boxers, comprised of a wide swath of demographics marched through streets protesting foreigners and the Chinese Christians whom they perceived had sold them

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Frolich, "Pictures of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895," *War In History* 21, no. 2: 214–250, *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, (accessed November 25, 2017), 219.

<sup>11</sup> Frolich, "Pictures of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895", 219.

<sup>12</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 54

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>15</sup> Frolich, “Pictures of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895,” 217–218.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.; Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relation*, 62.

out.<sup>18</sup> Because Christian missionaries had been involved in many of the treaty negotiations over the past 60 years, as well as the Catholics' declaration of exclusion from taxes because of the heresies the taxes supported, the Boxers made a direct correlation between the Christians and their country's struggles.<sup>19</sup> Chinese leaders of the Catholic Church in China were ordered to renounce their religion or face execution.<sup>20</sup>

At the beginning of the movement, the Qing government did not support or oppose the radical Boxers. From 1898 to 1900, the Boxers gained followers and became more violent. "In response, eight powers—Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, formed an alliance and sent troops to Beijing."<sup>21</sup> Some inside the Chinese ruling circles thought the time was right to officially oppose the foreigners, given the tide of events brought on by the Boxers, and the support of the population by declaring war.<sup>22</sup> Others realized that the Qing Army could not stand up to the foreign governments, and decided to draw up agreements to provide protection for foreign citizens and Christians in exchange for a promise that the foreign militaries would not invade.<sup>23</sup> The foreign alliance did not invade, but they did occupy Beijing and ransack the Forbidden City and Yuanming Yuan.<sup>24</sup> In the span of five years, China had lost Korea, lost Taiwan as part of the treaty to end the Sino-Japanese War, and now, once again, had Western troops occupying its capital. The Boxer Rebellion had done more damage than good. China had become a puppet state to

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<sup>18</sup> Henrietta Harrison, "Justice on Behalf of Heaven," *History Today* 50, no. 9: 44-51. *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed November 25, 2017), 45.

<sup>19</sup> Harrison, "Justice on Behalf of Heaven," 46.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>21</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 55.

<sup>22</sup> Harrison, "Justice on Behalf of Heaven," 50.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.



the foreign alliance, which began making decisions about Chinese territory without consulting the Chinese government.

The Russo-Japanese War was yet another point of departure for China. As Russia and Japan fought for land in Manchuria, China could only watch from the sidelines.

After Japan's victory over Russia in the Straits of Tsushima, Russia and Japan signed the Treaty of Portsmouth where Japan was granted the South Manchuria Railway, amongst other concessions.<sup>25</sup> This time, Japan would not allow its victory to be spoiled as it had been following the Sino-Japanese War in the Triple Intervention, where Russia, Germany, and France forced Japan to consolidate its gains in Manchuria to the Liaodong Peninsula.<sup>26</sup> Japan viewed that intervention as unfair and stifling; Japan determined to hold onto gains it made. Although Japan did not get reparations from Russia, they did gain access to the critical resources that they needed in Manchuria. Additionally, Japan had the political advantage in Manchuria, because of its support from the West, and the military advantage, because its large contingent that had not left since the end of the Russo-Japanese War. After several months of negotiations, Japan successfully concluded the Treaty of Peking with China, which granted Japan foreign residence, commerce, and agricultural rights, and access to natural resources in Manchuria.<sup>27</sup> China had officially conceded control of another portion of its country to a foreign power.

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<sup>25</sup> Rustin Gates "Solving the "Manchurian Problem : Uchida Yasuya and Japanese Foreign Affairs before the Second World War," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 1: 23-43. *Military & Government Collection*, (accessed November 26, 2017), 29.

<sup>26</sup> Gates, "Solving the "Manchurian Problem: Uchida Yasuya and Japanese Foreign Affairs before the Second World War," 27.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

## Nationalism Takes Hold

Leading up to the Boxer Rebellion, the Chinese people lacked the sense of nationalism of other nation-states. Rather than pledge their loyalty to the state, the Chinese people pledged their loyalty to their culture.<sup>28</sup> The Chinese viewed their culture as defining what society is, and so long as the Chinese people lived within the universal set of values defined by their culture, China would continue to be the only “true civilization.”<sup>29</sup> “Relying on family rites and community regulations, the society was governed through high-level community self-government rather than control through law.”<sup>30</sup> This would all hold true so long as China and its people remained isolated. However, following China’s lopsided defeats during the Opium Wars and the first Sino-Japanese War, the Chinese leaders came to the realization that China was not isolated and they could no longer ignore China’s lack of development compared to Japan and the West. China could no longer perceive itself as the center of humanity and realized that its universal set of values did not actually permeate outside of China’s geographic sphere.<sup>31</sup> China’s domination by Japanese and Western powers, and the humiliation that stemmed from the treaties these powers forced them to sign, turned China from a culture-based society to a nation-based society. The transformation to a nation-based society, and the humiliation and anger that resulted from political and military impotence resulted in nationalism.

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<sup>28</sup> Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” *Political Science Quarterly* 115, No. 1: 1-33, (2000). *Proquest document link*, (accessed October 12, 2017), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” 4.

<sup>30</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 67.

<sup>31</sup> Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” 4.

The Boxer Rebellion, brought on by “revolutionary nationalism,” was China’s first nationalistic movement, but because it did more to cause fear among the population than it did to unite them, it failed to create a true sense of nationalism amongst its people. Zheng Wang, in his book *Never Forget National Humiliation*, argues that the origins of nationalism lie with the middle class during Japan’s occupation of Manchuria.<sup>32</sup> Wang cites that the middle class, unhappy with the current state of affairs in China, began a “middle-out approach” where the middle class worked to energize both the lower class of Chinese society and the Chinese elites.<sup>33</sup> Further, Wang highlights the role that Lu Xun, an influential writer, had toward waking Chinese consciousness and patriotic feelings.<sup>34</sup> Lu wrote of “the slavish mentality, selfishness, mendacity, timidity, and passivity” that had plagued the Chinese and allowed their society to be controlled by an outside nation.<sup>35</sup> Lu’s writing inspired a nationalistic movement in 1919, the “May 4th Movement,” but it was the actions of Sun Yat-sen that actually *moved* China.<sup>36</sup>

Sun Yat-sen emerged as a leader during one of China’s most difficult times. Over 60 years after the beginning of the Opium Wars and now living in a country dominated by a Japanese occupation force, Sun Yat-sen led a revolution for change.<sup>37</sup> Sun Yat-Sen helped to awaken the Chinese people from their potentially destructive future.

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<sup>32</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 75-76.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Establishing what would become the Kuomintang (KMT) in 1905, Sun Yat-sen created China's first modern political party, representing a cultural shift.<sup>38</sup>

The writings of Lu Xun and the actions of Sun Yat-sen at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century show the first outward actions of the Chinese people and the first uses of “national humiliation” as a basis for that action. Sun Yat-Sen had galvanized the Chinese people; his theme: China would be a victim no longer. China would not operate under the identity of its past, but would evolve, and Sun Yat-sen would lead the revolution with nationalism as the backdrop. In 1911, the KMT began the Xinhai Revolution and, by 1912, the Republic of China was established.<sup>39</sup> China had awakened and nationalism was the tool that led them there.

### Nationalism Takes Pause

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) arose within 10 years of the establishment of the KMT Government. The CCP, formed by leaders inspired by Lenin's anti-imperialist theories, was ideologically different from, but foundationally similar to the KMT; both parties used nationalism as their basis for legitimacy and growth.<sup>40</sup> However, while the KMT used nationalism to excite the middle and upper classes against the imperialists, the CCP used nationalism as a grass roots campaign to rouse the lower class against the upper classes and the KMT. Although both parties would loosely unite to

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 77; Paul B. Trescott, "Henry George, Sun Yat-sen and China: More Than Land Policy Was Involved," *American Journal Of Economics & Sociology* 53, no. 3 (July 1994): 363-375, *Business Source Premier*, (accessed February 20, 2018), 1.

<sup>39</sup> James Leibold, "Xinhai Remembered: From Han Racial Revolution to Great Revival of the Chinese Nation," *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 1: 1-20, *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed February 19, 2018), 4.

<sup>40</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 78.

fight against Japan in the Anti-Japanese War from 1937-1945, the difference in the use of nationalism had profound effects.

The end of the Anti-Japanese War marked another turning point in China. Years of fighting the Japanese weakened the KMT. Although the KMT and the CCP had agreed to set aside their internal struggle for power in China to fight the Japanese imperialists, the reality was that the CCP sat mostly on the sidelines and watched as the KMT did the fighting. “Mao once cautioned his generals: “To fight with Japanese is not real patriotism. By doing so you are just patriotic to KMT’s China. Our Enemy is the KMT.””<sup>41</sup> At the end of the Anti-Japanese War, the narrative of the KMT, “Never Forget National Humiliation,” had focused Chinese nationalism and had given the Chinese strength to hold out against the brutal occupation of the Japanese, but it did not unite the entire country because it predominantly focused on the wealthy and middle class. Mao’s bottom up approach had gained significant strength and following. The KMT, worn and splintered after years of fighting the Japanese, could not match the emboldened CCP. The Chinese Civil War that followed the end of WWII lasted only four years, and by 1949, the Chinese Communist Party had declared victory.

Although nationalism had led to the “awakening” of China, under Mao, nationalism and China’s national humiliation ceased to be a rallying point. With the imperialists gone, Mao, in true communist fashion, focused China toward the elimination of class distinction and away from national identity.<sup>42</sup> “The CCP claimed not to be a national or ethnic party but rather a revolutionary party . . . it did not seek support or

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 82

<sup>42</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, "People's Democratic Dictatorship," *Vital Speeches Of The Day* 15, no. 24: 748, *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed February 19, 2018).

representation from all Chinese people, but only from the proletariat—the workers and peasants.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the KMT had used China’s national humiliation to incite its nationalism in both its fight for recognition in 1911 and its fight against Japan until 1945, a narrative away from which the CCP wanted to move. Any narrative that had motivated the Chinese to follow the KMT could prove dangerous to the victorious, yet undeveloped CCP. Further, under Mao’s class narrative, the corruption of the bourgeois caused China’s downfall, and the imperialists had only taken advantage of the situation; therefore, China’s *Century of Humiliation* was its own fault.<sup>44</sup> Under Mao and his successor Deng Xiaoping, the national humiliation storyline would be one of redemption and reconciliation, not one to incite nationalism.

### Tiananmen Square and the Return of Nationalism

What started as the Tiananmen Square protests, and ended as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, left Chinese officials grappling with the problems of dissent and government openness. What had caused the protests and how could China prevent similar protests in the future? The Chinese government’s answer to these questions would be a patriotic reeducation campaign, one that focused on China’s past humiliation at the hands of foreigners, rather than just focusing on party education.<sup>45</sup>

China’s reeducation campaign was adaptive and bold. Under Mao, discussion of China’s humiliation was stifled and hidden. In 1962, historians from Nanjing University

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<sup>43</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 87.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

wrote a book on the Nanjing Massacre; however, its public release was not allowed.<sup>46</sup> The Chinese government categorized the book as “classified,” and did not allow its publishing for Chinese understanding.<sup>47</sup> The narrative of China’s humiliation was the narrative of the defeated Nationalists. Under Mao, if the CCP allowed this narrative to exist it could both undermine its emphasis of class distinction and, worse, incite the same type of rebellion that led to the end of the Qing Dynasty. Allowing the KMT to return to Chinese culture was a risk Mao would not allow because it could result in a resurgence of the KMT that had sought refuge in Taiwan. However, after Mao’s death, given the separation of time since the establishment of the CCP and the Tiananmen Square incident, allowing this idea to resurface seemed acceptable, and, moreover, the CCP needed something to refocus its populace toward.

The Tiananmen Square protests that called for democracy and government reforms were dangerous for the CCP.<sup>48</sup> A pro-democracy movement could spread across the country and threaten the CCP’s legitimacy. The time was right to “educate the Chinese people about China’s humiliating experience in the face of Western and Japanese incursions and how the CCP-led revolution had changed China’s fate and won national independence.”<sup>49</sup> In turn, this would incite Chinese nationalism, a reason to appreciate and fight for the CCP rather than oppose it.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 86; Edward Friedman, "Raising Sheep on Wolf Milk: The Politics and Dangers of Misremembering the Past in China," *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* 9, no. 2-3: 389-409, *Military & Government Collection*, (accessed February 19, 2018), 397.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Lui, "Looking Back at Tiananmen Square," *Peace Review* 12, no. 1, March 2000: 139-145, *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, (accessed December 9, 2017), 139-140.

<sup>49</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 96-97.

## Nationalism Used Today

For international negotiations, democratic leaders often use their constituents' desires and requirements as pretexts for making or not making an agreement.<sup>50</sup> They can, in essence, use the need for reelection as a basis from which to bargain. However, authoritarian governments cannot use such excuses on the international stage because generally authoritarian governments do not depend on their constituents to maintain power. Jessica Weiss makes the argument that "anti-foreign street protests represent the analogous mechanism for authoritarian states."<sup>51</sup> The justification for this argument is that such protests not only undermine the credibility of the government, but they risk escalation of revolution.<sup>52</sup> Weiss's argument is compelling because the potential overthrow of a government is much more consequential to a ruling regime than the potential for the loss of an election. Just as dissent drives policies in democratic governments, the inverse is true in authoritarian governments. In China, the CCP uses foreign policy incidents to incite national uprisings.

One of China's most recent demonstrations of nationalism to sway public and international opinion occurred with the US's deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) to South Korea. The US's stated reason for deploying THAAD to South Korea is to shoot down North Korean missiles aimed at South Korea or North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) aimed at the United States. However, China is concerned that the US will use the THAAD radar to spy on Chinese systems, and, although unstated, China is likely concerned that such a system could mitigate

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<sup>50</sup> Jessica Chen Weiss, "Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China," *International Organization* no. 1: 1. *JSTOR Journals*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Jessica Chen Weiss, "Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalists Protests in China," 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



China's second-strike nuclear capability.<sup>53</sup> The result of China's concern was the encouragement of public anger and protests.<sup>54</sup> The imperialist West was emplacing a weapon system that would threaten Chinese sovereignty and interests. China's past humiliation came to bare and the immediate result was China's boycott of South Korean goods and South Korean businesses in China. China's state-controlled media attacked South Korea directly. As *The Economist* noted, one Chinese government owned and operated newspaper, *The Global Times*, "encouraged Chinese consumers to 'become the main force in teaching Seoul a lesson.'"<sup>55</sup> China used the power of nationalism, based on its historical exaggeration of its *Century of Humiliation* to incite an internal information campaign with international economic implications for South Korea, which, in turn, became defense implications for the US as South Korea acquiesced to Chinese pressure.

The key takeaway from this chapter is that China uses its *Century of Humiliation* to create a narrative of nationalism. One can begin to see the need for the US to stand up an interagency group to counter China's information campaign and its effects, else find itself behind and wanting when China employs its narrative. The next chapter will demonstrate how China references the treaties it signed during its Century of Humiliation to focus its narrative toward Japan and the West, regardless of the variety of actors involved in China's humiliation or of China's own complicit actions.

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<sup>53</sup> "Nationalism Unleashed – China is Whipping Up Public Anger Against South Korea," *The Economist*, March 17, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/china/21718876-it-wary-going-too-far-china-whipping-up-public-anger-against-south-korea>, (accessed December 12, 2017).

<sup>54</sup> "Nationalism Unleashed – China is Whipping Up Public Anger Against South Korea."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

### CHAPTER 3: AN ENEMY TO UNITE AGAINST

China has a deep-rooted distrust of Japan and Western powers. Any forward presence in Asia by the West, specifically the US, China portrays as provocative and threatening to Chinese interests. Likewise, China meets with contempt any actions by Japan to strengthen its military capabilities. When Japan's Prime Minister Abe put forth a reinterpretation of Japan's constitution that would allow Japan's Self Defense Force (SDF) to come to the aid of the US and its allies should they come under attack, outraged Chinese citizens quickly protested Japan's "militaristic" move.<sup>1</sup> China's distrust of Japan's constitutional shift is more likely due to China's fear of a furthered U.S.-Japan relationship than it is of a new mission for Japan's SDF, but regardless, the distrust exists because of events in China's past. However, China has a selective memory. While China is quick to unite its people against Japan and the West, it chooses to ignore those actions that Russia, an ideological ally, committed against it. China chooses instead to aggrandize events in its past that support its narrative, while ignoring those that do not.

This chapter will discuss the treaties that China signed during its *Century of Humiliation*, how those treaties manifested, and how a weak and defeated China was subjugated to foreign powers. This chapter will then discuss how, as China writes its current narrative, it uses Japan and the West as the culprits for its "historical trauma," ignoring those times where Japan and the West made accommodations or apologies, while simultaneously ignoring past actions that Russia committed against China where no reparations were made. This Chapter will close with a recent example of how rapidly

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<sup>1</sup> "Abe's Stain," *The Economist*, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21667981-chinas-angry-reaction-japans-new-security-laws-echoed-home-abes-stain>, (accessed November 26, 2017).

China can incite anti-Japanese and anti-Western sentiment based upon China's chosen narrative.

### Unequal Treaties

The end of the first Opium War marked the beginning of China's domination by the West and the first of many treaties signed where China would give up treasure, sovereignty, and territory. In one view, China was forced to sign the treaties to stop the marauding of foreign militaries, but in another view, China signed the treaties in naivety of Western intentions.<sup>2</sup> Having intentionally isolated themselves from the rest of the world, China was caught off guard by Western tactics.

The Treaty of Nanjing, which ended the First Opium War, had six provisions: "1) Extraterritoriality, 2) Indemnities of \$21 million, 3) A moderate tariff and direct foreign contract with the customs collectors, 4) Most-favored nation treatment, 5) The opening of five new ports for trade, and 6) Ceding Hong Kong to the British."<sup>3</sup> Although the indemnity and loss of Hong Kong were embarrassing, the Chinese did not necessarily view the treaty as a bad deal. Extraterritoriality would mean the British would have to police themselves, most-favored nation treatment ensured a trading partner for China, and open ports could prove to be beneficial.<sup>4</sup> The concessions though, were only the beginning for China.

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<sup>2</sup> Jianlang Wang, *Unequal Treaties and China*. (Honolulu, HI: Enrich Professional Publishing, 2016), *eBook Collection* (accessed November 26, 2017), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 61.

<sup>4</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 61.

At the conclusion of the Second Opium War, China signed the Treaty of Tianjin. This time it was not just the British extracting concessions from China; eight other powers, to include Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and the United States signed into agreements with China.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes from this treaty, other than an additional loss of sovereignty, was the division of Chinese territories into consular jurisdictions.<sup>6</sup> The division of territory into consular jurisdictions, or treaty states, marked China's transition to a semi-colonial state, allowing the foreign consular officials the right to monitor Chinese trials that involved foreign citizens.<sup>7</sup> These treaty states also obtained extraterritorial status for their citizens, and many had their own courts such as the U.S. Court for China in Shanghai. Furthermore, the foreign governments that signed the Treaty of Tianjin could now station ships in Chinese waters.<sup>8</sup> China had been subjugated to foreign powers leaving the Qing government nearly powerless; this would mark the beginning of the end of the Qing dynasty.

The end of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, marked another unequal treaty, the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Like the previous unequal treaties, this one extracted more treasure from China and gave more control to foreign powers. China ceded to Japan the island of Taiwan, Pescadores Islands, and the Liaodong Peninsula, paid a significant indemnity, and recognized the independence of Korea, although Japan occupied the state of Korea so its independence was questionable.<sup>9</sup> Russia seized the opportunity to deploy

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 50, 61.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>9</sup> The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, "Treaty of Shimonoseki," <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Shimonoseki>, (accessed November 26, 2017).

troops to China to secure the Eastern Railway, which Russia had assisted in building from 1897-1901.<sup>10</sup> The weakened state of China left it vulnerable to predator nations as they carved their pieces out of Chinese territory through concessions. By 1911, China had made 19 concessions to foreign governments, each involving a sizeable portion of land where China would lose administration.<sup>11</sup> The Qing government became, in many respects, a puppet government to the foreign powers, losing legitimacy and power, resulting in the deposition of the emperor and the establishment of a Chinese republic.<sup>12</sup>

### The Versailles Treaty and China's Rebuff

In 1897, following an incident in Shantung, China, Germany occupied the nearby Kiaochow harbor and forced China into a ninety-nine year lease of the harbor and its adjacent territory in Shantung.<sup>13</sup> For sixteen years, the lease operated at status quo, until, at the beginning of World War I, Japan fulfilled its mutual alliance agreement with Great Britain and after a two-month battle, seized the German-controlled Kiaochow harbor.<sup>14</sup> Although Japan had initially said its intent in securing the harbor was to return the territory to China, Japan's stance changed after its victory. Japan was proud of its accomplishment and wanted concessions for its war efforts.<sup>15</sup>

Japan issued China "Twenty-One Demands." These demands sought to allow Japan the decision of the disposition of the Shantung territory, allow Japan exclusive

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<sup>10</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Wang, *Unequal Treaties and China*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 63.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1927*, (New York: M.E. Sharp, Inc., 1997), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

rights to coal deposits throughout China, Mongolia and Manchuria for its own exploitation, require China to stop its leasing of coastal bays and harbors to other nations, and give Japan control of Chinese military and political affairs.<sup>16</sup> This outraged both the Chinese people and the outside world. China could not agree to the terms, as doing so would be tantamount to sacrificing the sovereignty of its nation.<sup>17</sup> Feeling the backlash from the international community, Japan eliminated most of the controversial demands. Japan reissued the reduced set of demands and gave China the ultimatum of accepting it or facing invasion.<sup>18</sup> The US continued to oppose the reduced set of demands; however, China had little capability to resist and conceded to the terms.

The US continued to oppose the Twenty-one Demands, as it was counter to China's "open door policy" which allowed for fair trade and business with China.<sup>19</sup> The US convinced China to enter WWI on the allies' side as a first step in reversing the terms, which China did in 1917.<sup>20</sup> Japan recognized that China's entrance into the war would complicate its ability to enforce its demands, and entered into "signed secret agreements with Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia that guaranteed her rights to the German concession in Shantung."<sup>21</sup> As the war ended and the Paris Peace Conference began, this secret agreement greatly complicated matters. Whereas China was certain that by joining the allies it would be treated as an equal and awarded back its territory, Japan was steadfast in ensuring it did not lose what it had earned in battle. The reality though, was

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<sup>16</sup> "Twenty-one Demands," *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th Edition 1. *Military & Government Collection*, (accessed November 26, 2017), and Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> "Twenty-one Demands."

<sup>19</sup> Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

that China added very little to the war effort; China had assumed its status as an ally would stand alone as its contribution.

President Woodrow Wilson would act as arbitrator between Japan and China as the US was the only reasonable objective party since it had not been a signatory in any of the problematic treaties.<sup>22</sup> However, Wilson could never reach an agreement where both parties were satisfied. The Treaty of Versailles, the result of the Paris Peace Conference, awarded significant concessions to China, despite China's minimal contributions to the war, including the cancelation of many of its previous treaties with Western powers that it perceived as "unequal," however, it did not award the Shantung territory back to China.<sup>23</sup> Japan insisted that it would eventually turn the sovereignty of the territory back to China (which it did in 1922), but it wanted the economic benefits of the territory.<sup>24</sup> China refused the entirety of the Treaty of Versailles, despite what it awarded China in the cancellation of the past "unequal treaties," and blamed the US for failing to negotiate on China's behalf.

China failed to secure its own territory and assumed being an ally to the victors of WWI would secure its territory for it. Rather than taking responsibility for its failings, China proceeded to blame the West. China believed itself taken advantage of, and the narrative was that the West was responsible.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 12.

## Japan's Occupation of Manchuria and the West's Culpability

Over time, the political landscape in Manchuria and in the world changed.

Russia's involvement in World War I reduced its interests in Manchuria, and China became tangled in a post-Qing dynasty civil war. The Great Depression had an impact on Japan's economy and, with its growing need for resources, it found exploitation of China as a method toward survival.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese were resistant to further exploitation by Japan and had started to fight back against Japan wherever they could. The Chinese began what they called the *Rights Recovery Movement* with the intention of gaining back sovereignty lost to the Japanese in Manchuria.<sup>26</sup> The Japanese Army would oppose this and use China's resistance against them. The Japanese Army, influential in Japanese politics, interested in changing Japan through military means, and seeking expansion in Manchuria, created what would become the Mukden Incident.<sup>27</sup>

The Mukden Incident was a series of fabricated terrorist attacks on the Japanese in Manchuria. The Japanese exploded one of their own railroad bridges and blamed it on Chinese rebels, then staged protests in Mukden, all as a way to justify the Japanese Army's takeover of Manchuria.<sup>28</sup> The Japanese quickly consolidated control over Manchuria in 1931, with little resistance internally or externally. The League of Nations disapproved of Japan's actions, but neither it nor the United States nor any other Western Power took action against Japan. China had once again suffered a humiliating loss.

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<sup>25</sup> Williamson Murray, and Allan Reed Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War, 1937-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 151.

<sup>26</sup> Gates, "Solving the 'Manchurian Problem': Uchida Yasuya and Japanese Foreign Affairs before the Second World War," 34.

<sup>27</sup> Murray and Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War, 1937-1945*, 148-153.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-153.



Through Japan's domination in Manchuria, it established a stronghold with which to further its conquest into China.

For the next six years, China and Japan lived an uneasy peace. Japan had not invaded China beyond Manchuria, however it had made non-violent advances south. The threat of Japan's advancement overcame the ideological differences that had fueled the civil war in China between Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang (KMT) Nationalist Party and Mao's Chinese Communist Party (CCP), who formed an agreement in a KMT-CCP united front to fight Japan.<sup>29</sup> Because of the previous inactions by the West, there was a realization that China would have to stop Japan in order to survive. Following a skirmish near the Marco Polo Bridge in 1937, Chiang ordered his troops into a demilitarized area and eventually committed to war.<sup>30</sup> Chiang's forces were no match for the Japanese forces, and Beijing and Tianjin quickly fell. Chiang's forces were overrun, suffering nearly 250,000 casualties.<sup>31</sup> Japan proceeded to take the Chinese Capital, Nanjing, and, in an effort to break the will of the Chinese people, raped, murdered, and plundered for nearly six weeks.<sup>32</sup> The exact number of deaths is unknown, but different sources document that between 200,000 and 300,000 Chinese were killed.<sup>33</sup> This horrific incident solidified a disdain and distrust toward Japan that persists even today.

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<sup>29</sup> June Teufel Dreyer, *Middle Kingdom and Empire of the Rising Sun: Sino-Japanese Relations, Past and Present*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), *eBook Collection* (accessed November 27, 2017), 71.

<sup>30</sup> Dreyer, *Middle Kingdom and Empire of the Rising Sun: Sino-Japanese Relations, Past and Present*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 57; Dreyer, *Middle Kingdom and Empire of the Rising Sun: Sino-Japanese Relations, Past and Present*, 75.

<sup>33</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 57.

## Russia's Territorial Grab

While Japan's actions in China during its invasion and occupation of Manchuria were inexcusable, there has been significant international awareness raised to this portion of China's history. Japan has formally apologized to China for its war crimes, its war criminals were tried and punished by the International Military Tribunal in Tokyo, and Japan paid compensation as part of its post-war responsibilities.<sup>34</sup> Moving forward to today, as Shogo Suzuki says, "it would be equally unreasonable to hold the postwar generation directly accountable for war crimes simply on the basis of their ethnicity."<sup>35</sup> One could argue that China has not healed from these "war injuries," not for lack of effort on Japan's part, but because the Chinese government is quick to refresh the memories of its populace about Japan's atrocities when it fits its narrative. This allows China to continue to view Japan as an enemy and treat any Japanese action, regardless of intention, as a threat to Chinese sovereignty. What is striking though, is how quiet China remains about the nation that secured by far the greatest amount of Chinese territory and never gave it back, Russia.

Before and during China's *Century of Humiliation*, Russia, too, took advantage of a weak China and secured Chinese territory. There existed an international competition for great empire status, and Russia was keen to play its part.<sup>36</sup> Just prior to the beginning of the second Opium War, Russia entered negotiations with China regarding territory on

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<sup>34</sup> United Nations, "Treaty of Peace With Japan," September 8, 1951, No. 1832.; Shogo Suzuki, "Will Japan's war apologies ever satisfy China," East Asia Forum, November 15, 2015, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/11/05/will-japans-war-apologies-ever-satisfy-china/> (accessed February 14, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Shogo Suzuki, "Can apology serve as a security policy? Responsible Scholarship and Breaking the Chains of Negative History in Sino-Japanese Relations," *Korean Journal Of Defense Analysis* 20, No. 4: 319-333, *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, (accessed September 7, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> S.C.M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and their Disputed Frontier*, (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1996), 58.

its northern frontier. Russia desired the land to extend its influence to the Pacific Ocean, allowing it to extend its Trans-Siberian Railway and establish its Pacific Fleet.<sup>37</sup> China was weak and knew that it had little military capability to resist Russia's demand for territory that included the northern bank of the Amur River and the land eastward to the Sea.<sup>38</sup> Russia also included with this a demand for additional territory, to include the Uda River and surrounding lands so that Russia could "facilitate land transport to various Russian posts, and to protect the Siberian interior from foreign encroachments."<sup>39</sup> China protested Russia's actions, however, being powerless to stop Russia, was forced to concede.<sup>40</sup> This would mark the beginning of several territorial seizures by Russia over the course of several years, and multiple treaty settlements. All told, by the end of China's Century of Humiliation, Russia had secured 665,000 square miles of Chinese territory, the majority of which Russia still controls, and claims as its own today.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to note that China is still sensitive over its loss of territory to Russia. During its time of weakness, Russia forced China to sacrifice land that it deemed part of its national heritage. However, the discussion of this loss is seemingly absent from international dialogue. Rather, when referring to its Century of Humiliation in inciting its people, Chinese officials cite Japan and the West as the primary perpetrators and conveniently leave Russia out of the conversation.

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<sup>37</sup> S.C.M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and their Disputed Frontier*, 93.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

## Japan and the West

Today, China's *Century of Humiliation* lives on through national monuments and a political education that aggrandizes the past actions of Japan and the West. By doing this, China ensures its people not only understand their history to justify the current government, but also to maintain a distrust of the outside world, particularly of Japan and the West, in an effort to explain government actions and garner public support.

This distrust came to a head in 2010, when a Chinese fishing trawler “maneuvered aggressively against Japanese Coast Guard Vessels in the vicinity of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.” The Japanese Coast Guard arrested the Captain of the ship, garnering a swift and aggressive reaction by China.<sup>42</sup> Angry at how Japan handled the fisherman, China took action. Anti-Japanese sentiment flared, and Chinese citizens took to the streets in protest of Japan's actions. A simple demarche would likely have sufficed, but instead China went for the economic jugular of Japan, arresting Japanese factory workers inside of China, and allegedly embargoing rare earth metals.<sup>43</sup> The embargo did not last long though, as the threat to Japan's economy forced it to quickly release the Captain.<sup>44</sup> This example shows just how fragile the relationship between the two nations is, and how China meets any Japanese action, viewed as aggressive or hostile, with unfettered bitterness and retaliation because of their perceived shared history.

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<sup>42</sup> Lyle J. Goldstein, "KEYSTONE: Japan and US-China Relations," In *Meeting China Halfway: How to Defuse the Emerging US-China Rivalry*, 225-62. (Georgetown University Press, 2015), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bs0cx.11>, (accessed October 21, 2017), 236.

<sup>43</sup> Goldstein, "Keystone: Japan and US-China Relations," 236.

<sup>44</sup> Tania Branigan and Justin McCurry, "Japan Releases Chinese Fishing Boat Captain," *The Guardian*, September 24, 2010. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/24/japan-free-chinese-boat-captain>, (accessed October 21, 2017).

This Chapter highlights how, during China's *Century of Humiliation*, China found itself unable to control its borders and secure its sovereignty. Weakened, China signed multiple treaties that exploited China economically. Additionally, Japan's egregious actions during its invasion and occupation of Manchuria and most of China during World War II, created a disdain of Japan that China cannot let go of, no matter the time past or the apologies made. China uses these treaties from its past that it has deemed as "unequal treaties," along with Japan's past actions, to focus its nationalistic narrative toward Japan and the West, while purposely ignoring the actions that its ideological partner and neighbor, Russia, committed during the same period. An interagency communications group, focused on countering China's narrative, could exploit this exact narrative by highlighting Russia's role in "humiliating" China, and China's complicities by ignoring those facts. The next Chapter will demonstrate how China currently uses this focused narrative from its Century of Humiliation to project power, diplomatically and economically.

## CHAPTER 4: CHINA'S USE OF ITS CENTURY OF HUMILIATION TO PROJECT POWER

In 2012, the Mayor of Tokyo announced that the right-wing government of Tokyo would purchase the Senkaku/Diayou Islands from private Japanese citizens, the current “owners” of the property.<sup>1</sup> The islands have been uninhabited since WWII. This begs the question, why would Tokyo want to purchase islands that are over 100 miles from both Taiwan and Okinawa? The answer: political gamesmanship. The intent behind the purchase was to embarrass Japan's Noda government by stirring a territorial issue between Japan and China, and in turn show the weakness of the Noda government in its dealings with China.<sup>2</sup> Japan, China, and Taiwan all claim the islands, but until this announcement by the Tokyo government, the issue of the sovereignty of the islands was mostly unspoken to avoid inciting territorial claims escalation.

If the Noda government did nothing and allowed the right-wing Tokyo government to purchase the islands, it risked upsetting the uneasy balance that existed between the three nations regarding ownership. If the Noda government intervened and blocked the purchase, it risked showing weakness to the Japanese populace, weakening its legitimacy and jeopardizing reelection. Unfortunately, Japan's Noda government took the bait and took an even worse course of action. Rather than do nothing and look weak, or allow the right-wing Toyko government to purchase the islands, the Noda government

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<sup>1</sup> Michael McDevitt, "The East China Sea: The Place Where Sino-US Conflict Could Occur," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 36, no. 2: 100-110, (2014), *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed September 10, 2017), 102, and Peter Hays Gries, Derek Steiger, and Tao Wang, "Popular Nationalism and China's Japan Policy: the Diaoyu Islands Protests, 2012-2013," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, No. 98: 264-276, *Academic Search Premier*, (accessed September 10, 2017), 161.

<sup>2</sup> Michael McDevitt, "The East China Sea: The Place Where Sino-US Conflict Could Occur," 102.

decided the least provocative course was to purchase the islands themselves.<sup>3</sup> However, China saw confrontation in the Noda government's actions, as any purchase of the islands was a nationalization of the islands and an affront to China.<sup>4</sup> China immediately rejected Japan's purchase of the islands and escalated the situation by making an update to its territorial baseline to include the Senkaku/Diayou Islands.<sup>5</sup> China then began what has become its new *modus operandi*: incite nationalism to unite the Chinese people in a common cause to both justify government actions and increase China's bargaining stance, and incite anti-Japanese/anti-U.S. sentiment in relation to China's Century of Humiliation to show how Japan and the West are once again teaming up to diminish China. Over the next 18 months, China would engage its new strategy to punish Japan for its actions and to show the world that China's days of being pushed around were over.

#### History of Senkaku/Diayou Island Ownership

Japan annexed the Senkaku/Diayou Islands from China at the end of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and leased the islands to a private businessman to establish a fish-processing plant.<sup>6</sup> The islands were designated part of the Okinawa prefecture by Japan and have remained as such ever since. At the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Japan withdrew its personnel from the islands and the islands have remained uninhabited since.<sup>7</sup> The US did control the islands from the time of Japan's

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Gries, Derek Steiger, and Wang Tao, "Social Media, Nationalist Protests, and China's Japan Policy: The Diaoyu Islands Controversy, 2012–13," In *The Internet, Social Media, and a Changing China*, edited by DeLisle Jacques, Goldstein Avery, and Yang Guobin: 161-79, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1b3t8nr.11>, 162.

<sup>5</sup> Michael McDevitt, "The East China Sea: The Place Where Sino–US Conflict Could Occur," 103.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 101.

surrender in 1945 until the US reverted the control of Okinawa back to Japan in 1971, but remained neutral regarding claims to the islands.<sup>8</sup> However, the Secretary of State at that time, William Rogers, affirmed that so long as the islands were under administrative control of Japan, the US was treaty-bound to defend Japan in defense of its territory.<sup>9</sup> In the midst of U.S. ownership of Okinawa in 1968, a geological survey noted the potential existence of vast natural resources in the bedrock in and around the Senkaku/Diayous. Two years later, after Japan and Taiwan discussed a joint venture in exploring the resources near the islands, China reasserted its claim to the islands as part of Taiwan, and therefore part of China.<sup>10</sup> China asserted that Japan had taken the islands during China's *Century of Humiliation* where China had little recourse.<sup>11</sup> However, China did little to regain control. Status quo of the islands remained, until the Tokyo government brought the issue of ownership of the islands back into question.

### Nationalism Employed

In the immediate aftermath of Japan's purchase of the Senkaku/Diayou Islands, Chinese citizens were seemingly dissatisfied with China's response to Japan. While Chinese citizens responded with a level of outrage towards Japan, there was also frustration toward the CCP and perception by the citizens of inaction.<sup>12</sup> However, China's state-controlled media quickly funneled the dissatisfaction and frustration into nationalism. On September 11, 2012, Chinadaily.com.cn, published the article "Chinese

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 102, 104.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 101, 102.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>12</sup> Gries, Steiger, and Wang, "Popular Nationalism and China's Japan Policy: the Diaoyu Islands Protests, 2012–2013," 169, 170.



Riled by Japan's 'Purchase' of Islands.”<sup>13</sup> The article referenced the anger that the Chinese citizens had over the nationalization of the islands and referenced the level of tweets on Sina Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, to indicate how “concerned” the Chinese populace was over the issue. A study done by Peter Gries, Derek Steiger, and Wang Tao compared Chinese Sina tweets and Chinese news stories about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute, to protests and street demonstrations over the period of September 11 to 18.<sup>14</sup> The results, seen in Figure 1 below, show that, following increased social media activity and news stories, the level of protests and street demonstrations rose significantly. Due to China’s closed society, it is difficult to ascertain whether it was a bottom-up or top-down movement, however, given China’s record of controlling media output and stifling anti-CCP social media, it is difficult to see how this could have been anything but a top-down movement. And, even if it was a bottom-up movement as is argued by Gries, Steiger and Tao, the fact that the CCP did not stop or suppress the social media and protests shows that it was, at the very minimum, sanctioned.

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<sup>13</sup> “Chinese Riled by Japan’s ‘Purchase’ of Islands,” November 9, 2012, *Chinadaily.com.cn*, [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012Diaoyu/2012-09/11/content\\_15750933.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012Diaoyu/2012-09/11/content_15750933.htm), (accessed December 19, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Gries, Steiger, and Wang, "Popular Nationalism and China’s Japan Policy: the Diaoyu Islands Protests, 2012–2013," 162.

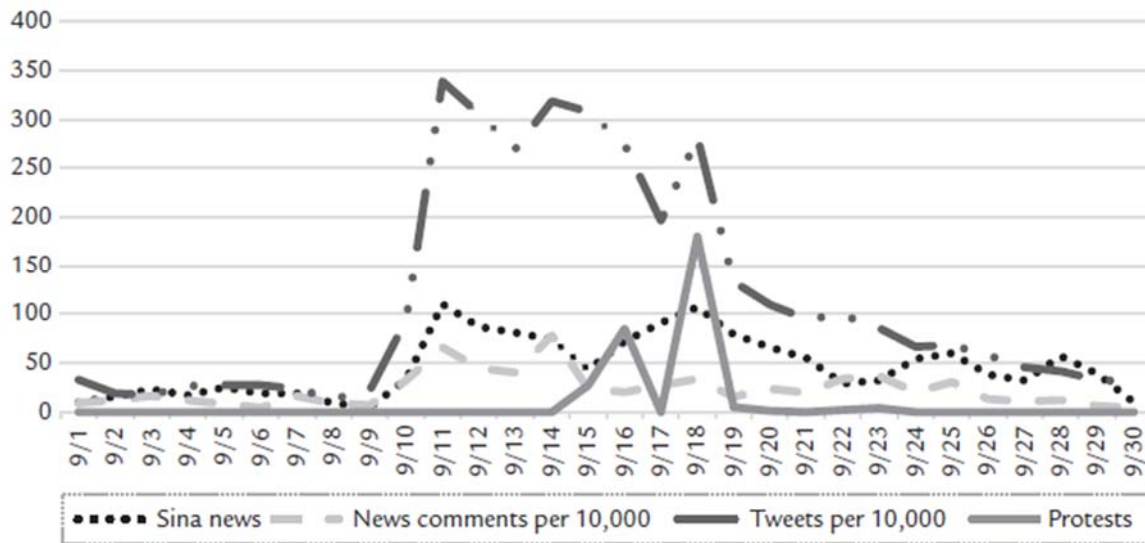


Figure 1. Social Media/News and Protests<sup>15</sup>

China used nationalism with a tie to its *Century of Humiliation* to mobilize its citizens to show Japan and the world that China could not accept Japan's actions. When China invokes nationalism in this manner, it does so to change the narrative of the situation. From a purely pragmatic view, the only value to the uninhabited rocks is the resources that are contained in the bedrock below them.<sup>16</sup> However, by employing nationalism, the new narrative becomes one about China's century as a victim. The dispute of the islands is really about resources and territory, however what the global community begins to see and hear is that Japan is once again taking advantage of China, and the Chinese citizens cannot and will not endure being humiliated once again. China's victim narrative plays much better to the international community than does a narrative about resource exploitation.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>16</sup> This is not to argue that China could not build up the islands to shore up its defensive perimeter as it has done in the South China Sea, however, when this dispute occurred China had not yet begun its aggressive island building campaign.

With a better international narrative, China's offensive actions appear less hostile and more defensive. When China sent armed naval vessels to the islands it did so to "defend itself," not to aggressively take control of territory. In 2013, when China set up an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that overlapped Japan's ADIZ, which had existed since 1969, it was only doing so to "protect what was rightfully China's soil."<sup>17</sup> The international community is much more accepting of "defensive" language and acts, even if the acts are militaristic and very offensive in nature. China used this defensive narrative to justify its island building campaign in the South China Sea, and within a couple of years had not only deployed oil rigs to contested areas, but had also established islands with advanced offensive military equipment on them. Narratives matter in the international community and China has become an expert in using nationalism, based on its *Century of Humiliation*, to control and exploit its narrative.

#### Anti-Japanese and Anti-U.S. Sentiment Employed

The nationalization of the Senkaku/Diayou Islands once again brought to light China's perception of its humiliating past. The fact that Japan had annexed the islands during China's *Century of Humiliation* made it an easy reminder of the humiliation that China had endured at the hands of Japan. Anti-Japanese and anti-U.S. sentiment rang loudly as Chinese citizens voiced their opinions. Protesters vandalized Japanese factories in China, boycotted Japanese goods, and "hurled bottles at U.S. ambassador to China Gary Locke's car, grabbing its American flag, and blocking him from entering the U.S.

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<sup>17</sup> McDevitt, "The East China Sea: The Place Where Sino-US Conflict Could Occur," 103.

Embassy.”<sup>18</sup> However, after China’s slow, methodical reaction to Japan’s statement of purchase, some of the anti-Japanese and anti-U.S. sentiment turned on the Chinese government.<sup>19</sup> The nationalism being cultivated needed an outlet.

China found an outlet to public anger when it deployed a People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessel to the disputed region.<sup>20</sup> This was an escalatory move by China as the previous ships it had sent were Chinese Maritime Surveillance (CMS) vessels, the equivalent to U.S. Coast Guard ships. China’s move was met with approval by its population and trepidation by the US, both being advantageous for China. On one hand, China had its people cheering on the possibility of conflict, and on the other, had the US backing away in search of a diplomatic solution to avoid a conflict over uninhabited rocks in the ocean.<sup>21</sup> This showed the Chinese citizens that their government was once again strong, and could and would stand up to Japan and the West.

The takeaway is not just that China would be willing to stand up for what it believes is within its national interests, but that China *will*, in fact, stand up for those interests. And, now that China will defend its interests, it will oppose any action by Japan or the West, especially if that action can be related to China’s past. As China continues to pursue its “patriotic education campaign,” using history education to “arouse its citizens’ historical consciousness and to promote social cohesion,” any action against China that can be related to the *Century of Humiliation*, especially when the Chinese government stands to gain, will be met with force and hostility.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>22</sup> Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation : Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 116.

## Potential for Danger in China's Strategy

During the Senkaku/Diayou Island dispute, China demonstrated that it could and would use nationalism and anti-Japanese/anti-Western sentiment, with the basis of its *Century of Humiliation*, to mobilize its citizens and justify its actions to the international community. This strategy China uses to gain public support and show the international community its anger and resolve comes with risk. As explored by Weiss, using nationalism in an authoritarian government is dangerous, and if not controlled, can quickly escalate into an undesirable situation. The Senkaku/Diayou protests were a precarious situation; although China's government did a good job funneling the energy and anger of its people away from itself, it was really only able to do so after escalating the crisis by sending Naval warships to the islands, appeasing those protesters who were angry at the Chinese government. Has a dangerous precedent been set? What if an incident occurs between China and the West, where, after applying its strategy of inciting nationalism and anti-Western sentiment, China feels it must escalate its response beyond an indicated U.S. red line to appease its people? Depending on which political party is in control in the US, crossing a red line may lead to armed conflict. In which case, it is doubtful that the CCP would place regime survival below its threshold for armed conflict, making war inevitable.

Perhaps an incident that would lead to both a nationalistic response by the Chinese government, and an increase in escalation to control it, could be one involving Taiwan, or more dangerously, an incident that rouses emotions related to the Nanjing Massacre. While the latter is less likely, in China's view, Japan has yet to atone for the

atrocities committed in Nanjing in 1937.<sup>23</sup> All the while, China has increased its “patriotic education” in relation to the Nanjing Massacre, seeing Xi, and China’s two presidents before him, take part in commemoration events at the Nanjing Massacre Museum on the anniversaries of the incident. Concerning Taiwan, China holds reunification as one of its six core national interests.<sup>24</sup> Anytime the US makes official communications with Taiwan, China immediately rebukes them. As said by China’s defense spokesperson in relation to a defense report by Taiwan, Ren Guoqiang, “The Chinese mainland resolutely opposes any official contact between the United States and Taiwan.”<sup>25</sup> While the US and Japan have been careful not to poke the proverbial bear as it relates to Taiwan and the Nanjing Massacre, as was seen with the Senkaku/Diayou Island controversy, all it takes to escalate the situation is one misstep by any of the actors. Given the political and historical significance of both Taiwan and Nanjing, it is not difficult to see how any misstep could lead to nationalism, escalation, and eventual war. Recognizing triggers that lead China to use nationalism and protests justified by its *Century of Humiliation* may help Japan and the US de-escalate a situation before it leads to war. Or, if de-escalation is not possible, at very minimum Japan and the US can use the increase in protests, the increase in the violence of the protests, and the potential for the protests to boil over, as a key indicator to Chinese resolve and China’s willingness to risk war.

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Dorsey Iglauer, "Nanjing's 70-Year-Old Ghost Story," *Chinese American Forum* 23, no. 3: 36-39, *EBSCOhost* (accessed December 28, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Information Office of the State Council, “China’s Peaceful Development,” [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/09/09/content\\_281474986284646.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm), (accessed December 28, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> “Mainland Opposes US-- Taiwan Official Contact: Spokesperson,” *Xinhuanet*, December 28, 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/28/c\\_136858029.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/28/c_136858029.htm), (accessed 28 December, 2017).

## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

Globalization has had profound effects on the availability of information and the transmission of that information. In the highly connected world of today, with twenty-four hour news and multiple mediums by which to pass the information, it has become difficult to discern real news from disinformation. No indication of this could be clearer than the fallout from the 2016 U.S. election where multiple social media platforms admitted that their sites had been complicit in the transmission of fake news regarding the election, some of that news transmitted by foreign entities. This disinformation technique is not new, only the speed of transmission and receipt is. The problem exists in countering this false messaging. When China excites its population concerning some action involving Japan or the West, using its *Century of Humiliation* to incite nationalism, and displays its discontent to the international community to gain political leverage, there needs to be a counter-information campaign that dispels China's narrative to diminish China's bargaining power. This paper recommends the US stand up an Interagency Strategic Communications Group (ISCG) with the sole purpose of counter-messaging, similar to the Active Measures Working Group that the US stood up in the 1980's to counter Soviet disinformation.<sup>1</sup>

During the height of the Cold War, the Soviet-controlled press released false stories about the US and its actions to discredit and damage the U.S. image.<sup>2</sup> In particular, a story was released that claimed the "U.S. military created the AIDS virus

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<sup>1</sup> Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference*, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2012) *NDU Libraries Catalog*, (accessed February 13, 2018), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference*, 6.

and released it as a germ warfare weapon.”<sup>3</sup> The Soviet disinformation effort was relatively effective, with the AIDS story being “reprinted or rebroadcast in over 80 countries in 30 languages.”<sup>4</sup> Along similar lines, China still maintains that the US used biological warfare during the Korean War, even though Russian documents, released under the Soviet Glasnost policy, proved this a lie.<sup>5</sup>

China also maintains a false narrative of its history to influence its own people. Leaked minutes from a meeting that followed a speech by Xi Jinping in 2010, display the effort to which the CCP goes, to “preserve the CCP’s monopoly on history,” and to prevent “challenges to the version of history on which the Party’s legitimacy partly rests.”<sup>6</sup> In a panel following a speech by Xi Jinping, panelists discussed Xi’s justification of limiting history to China’s general population. One panelist said, “If some of our Party’s secrets are made known to the public, it is certain to cause ideological confusion and lead to doubt over the legitimacy of our Party’s power. That would be chaos.”<sup>7</sup> He went on to say how “if you officially told the commoners that our Party was in control during this period [1959-1961] we’d be responsible for the starvation of 38 million and countless of villages, how dreadful!”<sup>8</sup> Another panelist noted, “I full-heartedly endorse Headmaster Xi’s speech, the spirit of which tells us to say what must be said, and not to

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>5</sup> Shiwei Chen, "History of Three Mobilizations: A Reexamination of the Chinese Biological Warfare Allegations against the United States in the Korean War," *Journal Of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 3: 213-247. *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, (accessed February 15, 2018), 2.

<sup>6</sup> “Party History and What the People Can’t be Told,” *China Digital Times*, January 3, 2018, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/01/translation-party-history-people-cant-told/>, (accessed February 15, 2018), 1.

<sup>7</sup> “Party History and What the People Can’t be Told,” 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2.



say what shouldn't be said.”<sup>9</sup> The discussion continues, with the main point being that the Chinese government cannot tell its people the truth about its past, because if it does, it is likely to face revolt and potentially revolution. Instead, China spins its narrative to its advantage, incites nationalism, creating positive diplomatic effects for itself, both internally and externally. An ISCG could counter China's internal narrative and bring truth to the Chinese people.

An ISCG could also counter China's “Three Warfares Strategy.”<sup>10</sup> As recognized by the CCP's Central Committee and Central Military Commission, China's Three Warfares of Psychological Warfare, Media Warfare, and Legal Warfare, together, form a “warfare concept aimed at preconditioning key areas of competition in its (China's) favor.”<sup>11</sup> One can quickly discern how a trauma narrative fits squarely within psychological warfare, especially when viewed through the Chinese lens of “preconditioning key areas of competition,” which is exactly what China is doing when it recalls events from its *Century of Humiliation*. Further, using state controlled media, China is able to foment anti-Japanese and anti-U.S. sentiment based on its *Century of Humiliation*, to, as stated previously, show political resolve, and thereby benefit from a self-serving narrative. An ISCG, with the purpose of counter-messaging, could expose China's narrative for what it is: half-truths with strategic implications. This would, as it did in the 1980's with the Soviets, “raise the political cost of disinformation by sensitizing foreign and domestic audiences to how they are being deceived.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy A. Walton, *China's Three Warfares*, (Herndon VA: Delex Systems, January 2012), <http://www.delex.com/data/files/Three%20Warfares.pdf> (accessed March 11, 2017), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Walton, *China's Three Warfares*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference*, 3.

Although it would be difficult to transmit the ISCG's messaging inside China proper, globalization has profound effects on the availability of information. Even if China continues to block internet sites and information it deems dangerous to its party, given today's interconnected world, it would be difficult to keep all information away from the Chinese public. This could have profound effects inside of China. If the Chinese citizens were made aware that, in fact, it was their own government who starved millions of people during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the current regime would find its credibility questionable, and subsequently result in questions regarding its legitimacy.

Along with influencing China's internal messaging, an ISCG could influence China's international negotiations. With timely messaging, the ISCG could prevent China from playing its "trauma narrative" on the international stage in fear of being exposed for telling half-truths, and therefore losing face. For instance, when China's uses the guise of the unequal treaties as a justification for its nine-dashed line claim, or when it seeks control of islands such as the Senkaku/Dioyou islands, exposing China's complicit role in signing the historical treaties could significantly weaken China's argument. Or, when China uses nationalism to incite its people against U.S.-Taiwan arms sales, the ISCG could counter with an information campaign that highlights the role the nationalists took in freeing China during WWII, while the CCP stood idly by. There are many other situations where counter-messaging by an ISCG could reduce China's bargaining power and play a pivotal role in influencing China's use of propaganda.

Standing up an ISCG is not without risk. Such a group would face immediate scrutiny by the U.S. people as well as outside nations. Laws prevent conducting information operations, specifically physiological operations, against U.S. citizens, so

any messaging that the group executed would need to be external to the US.

Additionally, for the group to have credibility it would need to be 100% certain that what it publishes is accurate, as even one mistake would be ruinous to a group that was basing itself on “truth.” Lastly, such a group would need to be fair on the international stage to be credible. This means it would need to be willing to expose the open source actions that the US and its allies committed that had both positive and negative outcomes. The unintended effects from this, to include accusations of hypocrisy and deceitfulness, could be significant if not handled properly.

An ISCG would need to be apolitical with representation from the intelligence agencies, the judicial branch, the State Department, and the military, and would need to be subject to congressional oversight. Further, the release authority should be the President of the United States to ensure messaging is consistent with foreign policy objectives.

On a small scale, this niche capability already exists. The U.S. Department of State stood up the Global Engagement Center (GEC) in 2016, with the primary purpose of countering terrorist organizations.<sup>13</sup> With the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress codified the GEC into law with its mission being to “lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining United States national security interests.”<sup>14</sup> However, the GEC is underfunded and too small.

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<sup>13</sup> US Department of State, “Global Engagement Center,” <https://www.state.gov/r/gec/>, (accessed March 19, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> US Department of State, “Global Engagement Center.”

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), recognizing the important role that the GEC plays in countering terrorist organizations, provided \$40 million to the GEC to overcome its underfunding.<sup>15</sup> This more than doubled the \$35 million that Congress originally authorized to fund the organization.<sup>16</sup> To the outside observer, this indicates that Congress undervalues the GEC's capabilities. The cause of this "undervaluation" may be the newness of the organization, or, it could be because the GEC falls under the DoS, and the diplomatic instrument of power, rather than being an independent organization. The GEC needs to become the ISCG, a standalone organization comprised of all U.S. interagency organizations. The result would be an organization that represents the information instrument of power, an instrument the US has not effectively employed since the Cold War.

There is no question that the US and its allies need an entity to counter China in the information domain. Using its "trauma narrative," China has been able to harness the appeal of emotion on the international stage with complete acceptance and no resistance. Other than scholars that write on China's "chosen narrative," China will continue to execute its information campaign, integrated with its Three Warfares Strategy, until opposed. An ISCG is the entity needed to be the opposition to China to counter China's narrative and strategy, and to ensure the U.S. and allied interests are protected.

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<sup>15</sup> Elliot Gabriel, "'On the Offensive': US State Department Gives \$40M Boost to 'Troll Farm' Propaganda Efforts," mintpressnews.com, <https://www.mintpressnews.com/us-state-dept-gives-40m-boost-troll-farm-propaganda-efforts/238349/>, (accessed March 20, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel, "'On the Offensive': US State Department Gives \$40M Boost to 'Troll Farm' Propaganda Efforts."

## CONCLUSION

*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*  
- George Santayana, Spanish philosopher (1863-1952)

China did not wake up one day and find itself in the middle of its *Century of Humiliation*; the buildup was insidious. Had China's hubris not steered its self-centered view of the world leading up to its *Century of Humiliation*, it may have seen that the Westerners probing Chinese coasts for potential trade and profit had a technological advantage. However, China had fallen behind technologically and because it viewed outsiders as inferior, even barbaric, it did not comprehend that its way of life was at risk.

Today, China uses its history to not only shape its international policies, but also to help vector its people. In 1840, China did not see a threat to its sovereignty because it had what it needed to survive and thrive within its borders. China paid for its blind eye to the world in blood, treasure, and pride. It took many years for China to recover from its *Century of Humiliation*, and through its recovery, it developed two lessons that it applies today. The first lesson is that nationalism based on the past has a power of its own. When China sees a threat to its security or sovereignty, it is quick to incite nationalism as a tool to show the international community that the Chinese people government take the threat seriously and will escalate the situation as needed. Second, because of China's storied past, it can quickly raise anti-Japanese and anti-Western sentiment and play the role of victim to create sympathy for its cause, and if need be, economically punish those actors who oppose China or stand in its way. These lessons play out internationally today, particularly in China's policies toward Japan and the US.

China is not the only actor that can benefit from China's history. If Japan and the West can fully grasp that China derives its interest in its past, perhaps Japan and the West

can refocus their diplomatic efforts with China in the future. The first step to accomplishing this is countering China's narrative. China has a selective narrative, based on its *Century of Humiliation*, which it uses when it plays to its advantage. The US can counter China's selective narrative by establishing an Interagency Strategic Communications Group that counters China's false messaging with open truth.

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## **VITA**

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